

River Restore and Crane & Co. Celebrate Dam Removal



On Friday, November 3RD, a crowd of sixty gathered beside the sparkling waters of the East Branch of the Housatonic River to celebrate the breaching of the Old Berkshire Mill Dam.

Environmental Affairs Secretary Bob Durand led a slate of speakers expressing the Commonwealth's appreciation to Crane and Company for having the vision to take on this project, the strength of character to persevere through the permitting process, and the means to see it through.

Breaching of the "Old Berkshire Mill Dam" by Crane and Company is the first project to be completed under the River Restore Program. This project brings Massachusetts to the national stage on the issue of river restoration through the selective removal of dams. Massachusetts is fortunate to have a responsive and responsible corporate partner in Crane and Company and hopes that this project and their participation serve as a model and inspiration to

others as we continue to protect, maintain, and restore our rivers.

*With EOE
Secretary
Bob Durand at the
helm, a reach of the
East Branch of the
Housatonic River
flows freely for the
first time in 200
years.*



Photos by Joan Kimball and
Marc Volk, Foresight Land Services



Photo by Bill Byrne, DFW



Lansing Crane, CEO of Crane and Company, describes his family's 200 year history with the river. Photo by Bob Greco

River Restore began in May 1999, at the same time that Crane and Company approached the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to assist them in breaching this dam.

Since that time, Crane has worked in partnership with state and federal agency staff on permits and funding for the project, but, most importantly, in coming to consensus about what restoration means for this river.

EOEA Secretary Bob Durand presents Crane and Company with a Green Seal award for environmental leadership.

Photo by Joan Kimball



Photo by Marc Volk, Foresight Land Services





Photo by Joan Kimball



Photo by Bob Greco

Massachusetts Senator Nuciforo and Representative Kelly offer their congratulations and support.

Secretary Durand was joined by DFWELE Commissioner David Peters and DEM Commissioner Peter Webber in praising the commitment made by agency staff to keep this project moving forward and making financial resources available to protect the City of Pittsfield's water line, which lies on the riverbed just upstream.

Removal of this dam doubles the habitat available to the cold water fishery that exists in this river. The health and quality of trout are among the finest seen in this area.

There are approximately 3000 dams in Massachusetts, one dam for every four miles of river. River restore and its team of "triage" experts are busy visiting dams in every watershed across the state to make sure that we only remove dams that have outlived their lifespan and purpose, and can be appropriately and safely removed.



A dam stood downstream of Housatonic Street in Dalton for 200 years – an historic timber-crib structure and a concrete dam of more recent vintage. Now, a river runs through it.

This summer, the gates holding water behind this dam were opened and the impoundment drained to allow the bridge and Pittsfield water line to be stabilized. Thanks to all the rain we've had, the river scoured its bed, uncovering old gravels and boulders, and creating riffles and pools.

The river also revealed other treasures – shards of antique glass and pottery, and bricks from foundries past. However, the most significant find was an historic timber crib dam tucked behind the newer concrete structure.

According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the “materials and construction techniques of most of the dam indicate late nineteenth-century construction date...portions of the understructure...include saddle-notched logs that are likely of earlier date...suggests that the [original] dam was partially destroyed during a flood episode.”



Photos (upper right and lower left)
by Marc Volk, Foresight Land Services
Center photo by Bill Byrne, DFW